

REMARKS

Claims 6-10, 14 and 28 are pending and stand rejected as final. As this Amendment is being filed in the context of a RCE, the finality of the rejection should be withdrawn. Further, Applicant's previous response after final should be disregarded. Claims 6-9, 14 and 28 have been amended. New claims 33-51 have been added. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §102/103

Claims 6 and 10 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,077,049 to Dunn (hereinafter referred to as "Dunn"). Claims 6, 7 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 3,492,154 to Einstman (hereinafter referred to as "Einstman") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,447,724 to Helmus and U.S. Patent No. 4,769,286 to LeNoane. Claims 14 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Dunn in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,553,008 to Reischl. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

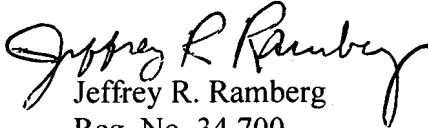
Applicant respectfully submits that none of the applied references discloses or suggests the claimed invention featuring the *entire* volume of polymer solution ultimately becoming or transforming into a gel. As argued previously, each of Dunn, Einstman and Reischl describes a coagulation or precipitation of polymer solution when sufficient non-solvent is added, or when an insufficient quantity of non-solvent is initially added, but then the environment changes, such as by reducing the temperature. Reischl is particularly clear that not the entire volume of solution transforms, but rather that phase separation occurs: "The quantity of non-solvent required to gell the solution can be determined by adding non-solvent dropwise to the solution with stirring until there is marked increase in viscosity and the mixture, after standing for a short while, for example, 1 to 5 minutes, forms a serum above or below a gelled, opaque, viscous and gel-like mass." (column 5, lines 20-27). Helmus discloses medical devices where a surface includes a porous polymeric composition holding a biologically active agent. LeNoane discloses reinforcing materials, which may be fibers, beads, rings or others. As such, these references fail to remedy the deficiencies in Dunn, Einstman and Reischl.

Thus, the claimed invention represents a significant advancement over the known art. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that these rejections be withdrawn.

In view of the above remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests issuance of a Notice of Allowance directed to claims 6-10, 14, 28 and 33-51.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action on the part of Applicant would be desirable, the Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,


Jeffrey R. Ramberg
Reg. No. 34,700

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c/o Kensey Nash Corporation
735 Pennsylvania Drive
Exton, PA 19341
Tel: (484) 713-2140
Fax: (484) 713-2909